

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

## 1 NAME

HISTORIC

Palisades Interstate Park

AND/OR COMMON

Palisades Interstate Park

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Bear Mountain State Park (cont'd)

\_\_NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Bear Mountain

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

26

VICINITY OF

STATE

New York

CODE

36

COUNTY

Rockland-NY

CODE

71

Bergen-NJ

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

### CATEGORY

\_\_DISTRICT

\_\_BUILDING(S)

\_\_STRUCTURE

SITE

\_\_OBJECT

### OWNERSHIP

PUBLIC

\_\_PRIVATE

\_\_BOTH

### PUBLIC ACQUISITION

\_\_IN PROCESS

\_\_BEING CONSIDERED

### STATUS

OCCUPIED

\_\_UNOCCUPIED

\_\_WORK IN PROGRESS

### ACCESSIBLE

YES: RESTRICTED

\_\_YES: UNRESTRICTED

\_\_NO

### PRESENT USE

\_\_AGRICULTURE

\_\_COMMERCIAL

\_\_EDUCATIONAL

\_\_ENTERTAINMENT

\_\_GOVERNMENT

\_\_INDUSTRIAL

\_\_MILITARY

\_\_MUSEUM

PARK

\_\_PRIVATE RESIDENCE

\_\_RELIGIOUS

\_\_SCIENTIFIC

\_\_TRANSPORTATION

\_\_OTHER

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

State of New York, Palisades Interstate Park Commission (Cont'd)

STREET & NUMBER

Bear Mountain State Park

CITY, TOWN

Bear Mountain

VICINITY OF

STATE

New York

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Rockland County Courthouse (Cont'd)

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

New York City

STATE

New York

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

None

DATE

\_\_FEDERAL \_\_STATE \_\_COUNTY \_\_LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

---

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The original nucleus of the Palisades Interstate Park is the 14 mile stretch of the Palisades from Fort Lee, New Jersey to Piermont, New York, on the west bank of the Hudson River. The Palisades section, in Bergen County, New Jersey and Rockland County, New York, comprises 2,452 acres, extending for 12 miles along the west bank of the Hudson River from Edgewater, New Jersey (just south of Fort Lee) to a point one-half mile north of the New Jersey-New York State Line, including most of the land on the top of the Palisades east of U.S. Route 9-W (Sylvan Boulevard) and all of the land along the Hudson River from the top of the Palisades to the river.

Upon the purchase of this original park tract, the commission set about developing recreational facilities such as trails, beaches, boat basin and docks, and playgrounds, as well as beginning the construction of the scenic Henry Hudson Drive under the Palisades, from Englewood, New Jersey to Alpine, New Jersey. Current recreational facilities include two boat basins, one at Englewood and the other at Alpine. In addition there are eight docks and landings located at intervals along the New Jersey shore. The New Jersey Park offices are also located at Alpine.

At the same time as the original developments, from north of Forest View, New Jersey, to the state line, underneath the 500 foot cliffs of Indian Head and along the rough bare talus of the Giant Stairs, this comparatively wild strip was left in its natural state.

In 1947, a similar resource, the Greenbrook Sanctuary was established. This 146-acre area on the top of the Palisades, a mile and a half south of Alpine, consists of a native wildlife, wild flower, shrub and tree preserve centered around a seven and a half acre lake, formed by the damming of Green Brook.

Beginning in 1947, the construction of the limited access Palisades Interstate Parkway was begun. By 1957, the 11-1/2 miles of the Parkway in New Jersey, from the George Washington Bridge to the state line, were completed. This four-lane divided highway, which continues for another 30-1/2 miles in New York, roughly parallels U.S. Route 9-W, along the western boundary of the New Jersey portion of the Park.

The most recent development in the New Jersey portion of the Park is located at Fort Lee. Here, the Park Commission began, in 1974, the reconstruction of the Revolutionary Fort Lee redoubt and the erection of a visitors' center for this historic park.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES    1900, formation of the    BUILDER/ARCHITECT  
                          Commission

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Palisades Interstate Park represents an unusual effort by two states, New Jersey and New York, to preserve the scenic beauty of much of the lower west bank of the Hudson River. Begun over 70 years ago by the two states, the Park now includes much more land than was at first visualized, to the benefit of citizens of both founding states and to the pleasure of innumerable persons from elsewhere.

The threatened destruction of the Palisades by stone quarrying after the Civil War stimulated the creation of the Palisades Park Commission in 1900. The Commission immediately began to secure the title to the Palisades between Fort Lee, New Jersey, and Piermont New York. This 14 mile stretch along the west bank of the Hudson is still the nucleus of what has expanded into an 11 unit park system, encompassing 53,320 acres.

History

Giovanni de Verrezano, as far as is known, was the first European to view the Palisades when he sailed up the Hudson River in April 1524. The explorer named the Palisades area, "La Terre de L'Anormie Berge," "The Country of the Grand Scarp." Seventeen years later, in 1541, the famous map maker, Mercator, showed the Palisades on his renowned map of the same year. The wildness and beauty of those cliffs remained largely unchanged for centuries, even when in the early decades of the 19th century some lumbering and quarrying occurred there. But after the Civil War the stone quarries rapidly multiplied, especially near the end of the century, when the demand for concrete for use in construction became very heavy. Like cannon in an unending battle, ceaseless blasting rocked the terrain day and night as the quarryers knocked down more and more of the western wall on the Hudson. If the destruction continued, it was clear that

The structure produced by 175,000,000 years of volcanic upheaval, glacial sculpturing, and slow erosion man was about to destroy in one lifetime.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>John A. Garraty, Right-Hand Man, The Life of George W. Perkins (New York, 1960), P.83.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(see continuation sheet)

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 3139 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,8	5,9,1	10,0	4,5	4,6	7,40	B	1,8	5,9,3	2,20	4,5	3,8	3,40
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING				ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING		
C	1,8	5,8,7	22,0	4,5	2,0	4,30	D	1,8	5,8,6	9,00	4,5	2,7	1,1,0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundaries of the National Historic Landmark are coterminus with the boundaries of the Palisades State Parks in New Jersey and New York, and the Tallman Mountain State Park in New York, which properties enclose the state-owned Palisades land.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
New Jersey	34	Bergen	3
New York	36	Rockland	87

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Richard Greenwood, Historian, Landmark Review Task Force

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey - National Park Service

DATE

5/30/75

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street NW.

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

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I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

2/17/84

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

((NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS))

((NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS))

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Palisades Interstate Park

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE

#2

Palisades State Park

Alpine

Congressional District 9

New Jersey 34

Bergen 3

#4

State of New Jersey, Palisades Interstate Park Commission

Palisades State Park

Alpine, New Jersey

#5

Bergen County Courthouse

Hockensack New Jersey

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Palisades Interstate Park

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

Across the New York border, there exists an inholding of private land along the river, from the northern boundary of the New York Palisades section to the southern boundary of the Tallman Mountain State Park, which extends in turn up to the town limits of Piermont. The 687-acre Tallman Mountain State Park is bounded primarily by 9-W on the west. A salt marsh below the Palisades constitutes one third of the park area, the other two-thirds of which is woodland, with recreational facilities, including a swimming pool, playing fields, and picnic areas.

The Palisades section and the Tallman Mountain State Park together constitute the Palisades Interstate Park Commission's holdings within the original geographic area, which the commission was formed to preserve. The nine additional units of the Interstate Park which collectively total 72,143 acres, are all located at various points in New York, in Ulster, Sullivan, Orange, and Rockland Counties. The New York Park offices are located in Bear Mountain State Park.

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Palisades Interstate Park

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

As more rocks fell to the foot of the Palisades, the wrath of many individuals rose. By 1890, citizens in both New Jersey and New York realized that only action by the two states involved could save "La Terre de L'Anormie Berge," so they sought help from their respective legislatures. They responded in 1894 by establishing a New Jersey commission and a New York commission, which bodies were to meet and discuss the ceding of the Palisades to the Nation. The following year the two legislatures, acting upon the recommendation of the two commissions, enacted measures ceding the water frontage and face of the Palisades to the United States, but Congress rejected the offer.

The defeat of the preceding attempt spurred the lovers of the Palisades to greater attempts to preserve the cliffs. In New Jersey the State Federation of Women's Clubs finally secured the passage of a bill in 1899, which the governor signed, authorizing the creation of a commission to study how the Palisades could be saved. New York created a similar commission, which Governor Theodore Roosevelt heartily backed. For about a year the two commissions met and discussed the situation, finally deciding that an Interstate Park Commission should be created with the power to purchase land in each state necessary for a park from Fort Lee, New Jersey, to Piermont, New York. New York quickly responded, Roosevelt signing a bill for that purpose on March 22, 1900. Similar action took more time in New Jersey, where the quarry owners vigorously fought an obvious threat to their business. Despite the opposition, the necessary legislation was finally approved. Thus was born the Interstate Park Commission, a unique creature at that time.

The Interstate Park Commission immediately began to secure the title to the Palisades between Fort Lee and Piermont. Speed was vital, for once the commission had been established, the blasting was greatly accelerated. Good fortune had made George W. Perkins, who had been long irritated by the explosions across the river from his Manhattan home, president of the New York commission. A man of decisive action and of position in the New York business world, Perkins wasted little time in giving the Interstate Park Commission a momentum that carried it forward for years. By December 25, 1900, the Commission had acquired an option on a quarry near the southern end of the projected park, Fort Lee Bluff, where 12,000 cubic yards of stone a day were being knocked from the cliffs. But \$122,500 was needed to complete the purchase of the land, and it was clear that neither state was ready to appropriate such a sum. Perkins then sought the aid of the king of finance in New York, J. P. Morgan, who, to Perkins surprise, donated the entire sum. This gift assured all concerned that the park could be established, and in 1901 New Jersey appropriated \$50,000 and New York \$400,000 for the project. Interestingly enough, New York's appropriation was to be used to buy land in New Jersey! General success followed, and by 1903, about 50 percent of the land had been purchased. Six years later, the initial goal had been

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Palisades Interstate Park

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

accomplished as the Interstate Park Commission controlled the 14 miles of the Palisades between Fort Lee and Piermont, eleven and two-tenths miles being in New Jersey and two and eighty-four hundredths miles in New York.

Even before the Commission had acquired the first 14 miles, backers of the undertaking had begun to think of extending the park in New York in order to protect more of the shore's beauty. Thus in 1906 the jurisdiction of the Commission had been extended to Stony Point. Furthermore, since 1909 the Palisades Interstate Park has been greatly enlarged, largely as a result of gifts. Mrs. E. H. Harriman's magnificent gift of 10,000 acres of land in Rockland and Orange Counties and \$1,000,000 was accepted by New York in 1910, which donation led to the development of Bear Mountain and Harriman State Parks.

Today, the Palisades Interstate Park Commission, a single commission formed in 1937 by a compact between New Jersey and New York, administers a park system that serves the Nation's largest metropolitan area. Despite its size and variety of attractions, the nucleus of the park still is the original fourteen mile stretch of the Palisades between Fort Lee and Piermont. And the preservation of those magnificent cliffs remains the Palisades Interstate Park's greatest accomplishment.



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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Palisades Interstate Park

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1

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